DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 469 UD 034 745

TITLE	The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Educational Outcomes: Cambridge, MA School District.
INSTITUTION	Harvard Civil Rights Project, Cambridge, MA.
PUB DATE	2002-01-00
NOTE	15p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Harvard University Civil Rights Project, 124 Mount Auburn Street, Suite 400, Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel: 617-496-5367; Fax: 617-495-5210; e-mail: crp@harvard.edu. For full text: http://www.harvard.edu/civilrights.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Access to Education; Citizenship; *Consciousness Raising; *Cultural Differences; Curriculum; Democracy; *Diversity (Student); Grade 12; High School Seniors; High Schools; Minority Group Children; *Multicultural Education; Public Schools; Racial Discrimination; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Cambridge Public Schools MA

ABSTRACT

This study examined the experiences of twelfth graders at a racially and ethnically diverse Massachusetts high school, surveying high school seniors regarding their experiences with and attitudes toward diversity. The surveys asked about how students experienced diversity in the curriculum, in classroom discussions, and in working with peers from different backgrounds. Students reported that racial issues were explored fairly frequently during classroom discussions in social studies and history classes. While most white students reported experiencing frequent discussions about race in class, only 70 percent of African American students reported similar levels of discussions about race. About 40 percent of students across all racial/ethnic groups reported that exposure in the curriculum to different cultures and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups helped them understand points of view different from their own. Most students were comfortable working with students from other groups. Students felt well-prepared for living and working in diverse communities as adults. They reported positive support and encouragement from teachers in general and regarding their higher education aspirations. However, racial equality had not been fully achieved, and certain kinds of unequal treatment were still evident within the school. (Contains 21 tables and figures.) (SM)

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ED 462 469

THE IMPACT OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: CAMBRIDGE, MA SCHOOL DISTRICT

January, 2002

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Cambridge public schools are extremely diverse and have been significantly integrated for many years. This city with a population of more than 100,000 has only a single high school, so the entire diversity of the city is present in this one school. As the nation's public school districts are being forced by court decisions to consider the future of integration in their communities, it is appropriate to ask students who have experienced desegregated schooling about its impacts. Although neighboring Boston has abandoned its desegregation efforts under pressure from conservative federal courts, the Cambridge School Committee decided in early 2002 to embrace a new strategy emphasizing socio-economic desegregation in an attempt to preserve racial and ethnic diversity in a time when policies based solely on race may be prohibited or strictly limited.

This is a study of Cambridge high school's twelfth grade students' experiences with racial and ethnic diversity. It is part of a series of studies by The Civil Rights Project across the country on what students in diverse and more segregated schools learn both in specific content areas and in preparation for adult life and work. Our findings are based on the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ), a survey instrument developed with the help of leading experts on school desegregation research across the country. We administered the DAQ to 379 seniors in Cambridge last school year.[1] We have previously released results from metropolitan Louisville and will be issuing reports on districts across the country in the coming months.

Students responded to the survey anonymously and were assured that their teachers and school officials would not see it, so there was no pressure to give answers officials might want to hear. The Civil Rights Project made the survey available and prepared this study without cost to the Cambridge public and this report is totally independent of district control or direction. We commend the Cambridge school leaders for permitting an independent examination of important and very sensitive issues. The DAQ results indicate many positive attitudes about diverse educational experiences; in addition, these results also pointed to areas of possible future improvement.

The survey was administered to all high school seniors in Cambridge. It was administered during school and all seniors were required to complete it, so we have data that reflects the entire population of students finishing secondary education in the city. The survey includes 70 distinct items, which were created to test several distinct dimensions of experiences and attitudes (four of these dimensions are highlighted in this report).[2] Since our results on these grouped items were quite consistent, we have strong evidence that the data in this report represents the actual experiences of the responding seniors and that our findings are not simply byproducts of question wording. These responses reflect a broad and consistent pattern of responses.

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[1] For the purpose of this memo we disaggregate the question responses by race. For this reason students who did not provide an answer to the racial/ethnic identification question (approximately 50 students) were omitted from the tables.

[2] On any given survey question between 11-13% of all students did not respond, these non-responses were not included in the calculations of these tables.

School level desegregation, of course, does not guarantee the presence of a curriculum that recognizes diversity, fair treatment of all groups of students, or deep and positive interactions between different racial or ethnic groups—all important factors that contribute to positive educational outcomes associated with diversity. It does, however, create a situation within which such interactions may occur, depending on many factors within the school and among the groups of students. Although we have not studied all the factors that can maximize the benefits of diversity, we have examined a number of very important educational outcomes. In this memo we provide basic responses, by race, to a number of questions from the survey.[3] Four distinct areas are explored, (1) student learning and peer interaction; (2) citizenship and democratic principles; (3) future educational aspirations and goals; and (4) perceptions of support by the school. These areas are all well established as important goals of education, and build essential skills that students need in order to achieve academic and professional success, and to become responsible citizens. The district and the state government have already published extensive test score data on the high school.

Obviously since Cambridge has only one large high school for the entire city we cannot compare desegregated and segregated high schools within this district. Our studies of six other school districts do show important differences in attitudes as a function of schools' racial composition. This study should be understood as providing information about the educational experiences of the city's students in an interracial school and their convictions about the way those experiences have contributed to their education.

Results from the survey suggest positive educational impacts of diversity for students in the district. Overall, substantial majorities of students report a strong level of comfort with members of other racial and ethnic groups. Most importantly, students indicate that their school experiences have increased their level of understanding of diverse points of view, and enhanced their desire to interact with people of different backgrounds in the future. Students report that they have been strongly affected by their school experiences. Given that Cambridge is an area of great ethnic and racial diversity and that the population growth of metro Boston is now being driven by non-white immigration, these are important issues both for the future work experiences of students and for community life. The survey results also indicate some dimensions on which an otherwise strongly positive record might be improved.

We received surveys from 78% of the entire senior class. This excellent response rate means that the responses provide a good representation of the class. The students responding to the survey identified themselves as 31% White, 18% African American, 10% Latino, 14% reported they were "other", and 10% said they were multiracial. Only 4% of the respondents identified themselves as Asian. This group is so small that calculations involving Asian students should be treated with caution since the responses of a handful of students can produce a big change in the percentages.

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[3] The racial/ethnic categories that we use are all self-identified, that is the students choose how they wish to describe themselves from an established list. Our categories are: African American, Asian, Latino, White, Multi-racial, and Other. The survey specifies that students can indicate two categories. We created the Multi-racial category by collapsing all students who identified themselves as more than one race into the multi-racial category.

Table 1: Distribution of Student Respondents to the Survey by Race and Ethnicity

	African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Unidentified	Total
Frequency	69	16	37	116	51	39	51	379
Percent	18	4	10	30	14	10	14	100

A. Student Learning and Peer Interaction

One basic theory concerning the educational impact of diversity is that interaction with peers from diverse racial backgrounds—both in the classroom and informally—has major educational importance, particularly when the interaction is done in positive ways. By exposing students to multiple perspectives, students learn to think more critically and to understand more complex issues. This is a basic finding, for example, in recent longitudinal studies of students at the University of Michigan.[4] This was, for instance, the basic educational justification for Harvard University's affirmative action plan and was upheld by the Supreme Court as a compelling educational interest in the 1978 *Bakke* decision which has governed affirmative action in higher education ever since.[5]

Our survey asked Cambridge students about the way they experienced diversity in the curriculum, in classroom discussions and in working with peers from different types of backgrounds. Overall, students report that racial issues are explored fairly frequently during classroom discussions in social studies or history classes. Eighty-seven percent of White students report that they experience frequent discussions about race in social studies or history classes and seventy percent of African American students report similar levels of exposure to discussions about race (Table 2). This is a sign that the teachers are taking advantage of an important learning opportunity in a multiracial school. In a substantially interracial school like Cambridge Rindge and Latin there are opportunities to interact with many members of other racial groups and to understand not only difference in general experiences and perceptions by race but also the diversity within each of these groups.

Table 2

Q8: During classroom discussions in your social studies or history class how often are racial issues discussed and explored? (% indicating 1 to 3 times a month)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
70	85	80	87	74	92	81

Around forty percent of students across all racial and ethnic groups report that exposure in the curriculum to different cultures and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups has helped them understand points of view different from their own, while a third of Latino students agreed (Table 3). In fact, only six percent of all students report that such discussions did not change their understanding of different points of view at all. The educational experience made a significant difference for many students and added something for almost all students.

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[4] See Patricia Gurin, "The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education," expert testimony in *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger* et al. (No. 97-75231 E.D. Mich., filed 1997) and *Grutter et al. v. Bollinger et al.* (No. 97-75928 E.D. Mich., filed 1997), 1999.

[5] For a discussion of the current status of research on this question see *Diversity Challenged*, ed. Gary Orfield., Cambridge: Harvard Educational Publishing Group, 2001.

Table 3

Q9: To what extent do you believe that these discussions have changed your understanding of different points of view? (% indicating "quite a bit" or "a lot")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
38	43	32	40	38	50	40

Given its location, right across the Charles River from a city that experienced massive race relations problems over school integration, and situated within a society with high residential segregation and increasing level of school segregation, Cambridge students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds report a surprisingly high degree of comfort working with people different from themselves in the classroom. In fact, 90 to 99% of all racial groups reported that they were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" working with students from other groups (Table 4). In a community where there is no majority group among the school age population and there is extraordinary diversity and immigration from all over the world, this ability will be an important asset for adult life and community success.

Table 4

Q29: How comfortable are you working with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds on group projects in your classes? (% indicating "comfortable" or "very comfortable")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
90	94	92	99	96	95	95

Some of the good results we see among Cambridge students have been achieved without strong faculty support. Aside from the small Asian group, fewer than 50 percent of students from the remaining racial and ethnic groups report a high degree of encouragement by teachers to work with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Table 5). (Figure 1 includes the full breakdown of responses for African American, Latino, and White students on this particular question.) Extensive research by both Elizabeth Cohen at Stanford University and Robert Slavin at Johns Hopkins University argues that positive interactions in collaborative academic projects are very important to realizing the potential gains of desegregation.[6] This is clearly an area that could be reinforced with staff development work. There are well developed and tested programs, such as Student Team Learning,[7] which have good techniques for creating successful inter-group learning opportunities. Such learning opportunities are necessary for promoting the type of rich discussions that lead to improved attitudes among peers of different backgrounds. In discussions with school system leaders we were impressed by their interest in strengthening staff development to produce even stronger results.

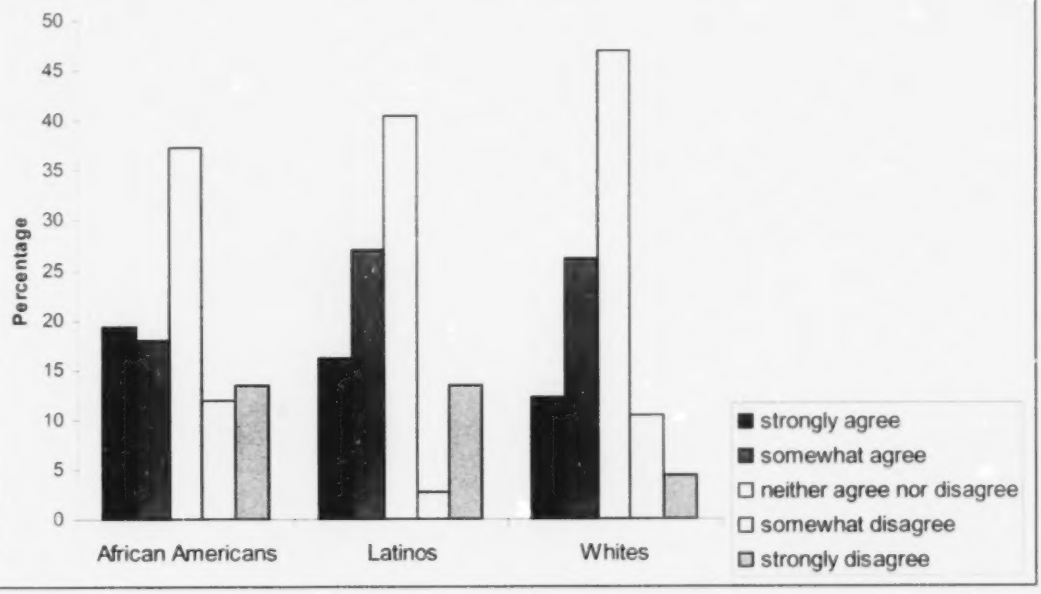
Table 5

Q24: My teachers encourage me to work with students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. (% indicating somewhat or strongly agree)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
37	50	43	38	50	32	40

[6] See, for example: Cohen, Elizabeth G. and Lotan, Rachel A. "Producing Equal-Status Interaction in the Heterogeneous Classroom," *American Educational Research Journal, v32 n1 p99-120 Spring 1995;* or Cohen, Elizabeth G. "Making Cooperative Learning Equitable," *Educational Leadership, v56 n1 p18-21 Sep 1998.*

[7] See, for example: Slavin, Robert, et al. "Putting Research to Work: Cooperative Learning," *Instructor,* v102 n2 p46-47 Sep 1992.

Figure 1: ***My teachers encourage me to work with students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.***



B. Democracy and Citizenship

From the time of Thomas Jefferson, American education advocates and leaders have often seen the schools as essential to the operation of a democracy, preparing people to understand their country and its institutions and to participate effectively in democratic life. With the vast migrations that began in the 19th century, schools were seen as central to shaping a nation of millions of people from diverse cultures and languages. In the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the schools became a central focus in the struggle to open the doors of opportunity to African Americans. Now, as the country becomes more multiracial every year, the schools face the challenge of a level of multiracial diversity never before seen in American society. The extremely strong focus on evaluating schools only in terms of standardized test scores in two or three subject areas may have distracted attention from a function of schools that is vital to the future of American society and American democracy. As the only institution that reaches the great majority of young people (nearly nine-tenths of U.S. children attend public schools), this function is of great importance for the future of U.S. society. Given public schooling's unique role in the United States, it is important to understand how they are helping or hindering the preparation of students to live and work among people different from themselves.

We asked the students to write about their personal views on the questions of what they *"learned or gained from attending school with people who are of a racial or ethnic group different from your own?"* One student who transferred into public school wrote: "I came from an all white private school. CRLS has conquered many fears that I had about people from different racial and ethnic groups. I feel very thankful." Diversity was very stimulating for another: "I have seen high school the preppy way (Milton Academy) where most people are white and wealthy. Now, at Cambridge, I have been exposed to more cultures and greater diversity than I ever could have imagined. I value my experience in public school much more because of this."

An immigrant student commented: "I have learned English, different cultures, how to communicate in English, made friends, from different countries. I have learned a lot about America. Cambridge public school changed my life a lot."

Yet another student noted how diversity in the high school not only helped their understanding of others but also to think about one's own background? "I have not only grown very comfortable with people from different racial or ethnic groups, but I have come to be excited and interested by such difference. I have learned to respect others while still staying true to my own heritage and beliefs." For another student, the experience made him aware of the need to continue to work on race relations: "I have learned that teachers and administrators have to deal with the hard issues and discussions that come with talking about diversity. I have learned that while we have had integrated schools for over 50 years, that people's minds are still segregated. And I have learned the importance of trying to overcome this and meet people unlike myself." Another noted that CRLS had a big impact on his thinking about the future.

> "I think that I have learned a lot about how to deal with people who are different, respect them and be interested in their culture and heritage and learn from them. Living and working with people from different race and ethnic group has become ordinary to me – it is not a big deal, and I think this will help me look beyond our differences and work and learn with them, throughout my life. It has taught me a way to see the world and its problems and perhaps how we can work together to fix them."

In a city with the diversity of Cambridge this need is already obvious. Do students develop a consciousness around the importance of interacting with people of different backgrounds, and does this have an impact on their future goals? In this report we examined whether students in Cambridge felt prepared to work and live in the diverse settings in which they currently and will increasingly find themselves. We asked students how their experience in school has contributed to their overall attitudes about working in a multi-racial setting. The findings are overwhelmingly positive in this area, suggesting that Cambridge high school is helping to produce young adults who are ready to operate in diverse communities. This skill is critical to living in this society, particularly as many future economic opportunities will involve contact with people who are from different cultures and may hold different worldviews. Nearly all students (over 90 percent) say that they are prepared to live and work among people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Table 6a). An overwhelming majority of all students report being comfortable working with a supervisor of a racial and ethnic background different than their own (Table 6b).

Table 6a

Q25: After high school, how prepared do you feel to work in a job setting where people are of a different racial or ethnic background than you are? (% indicating "somewhat" or "very" prepared)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
94	100	89	94	90	95	93

Table 6b

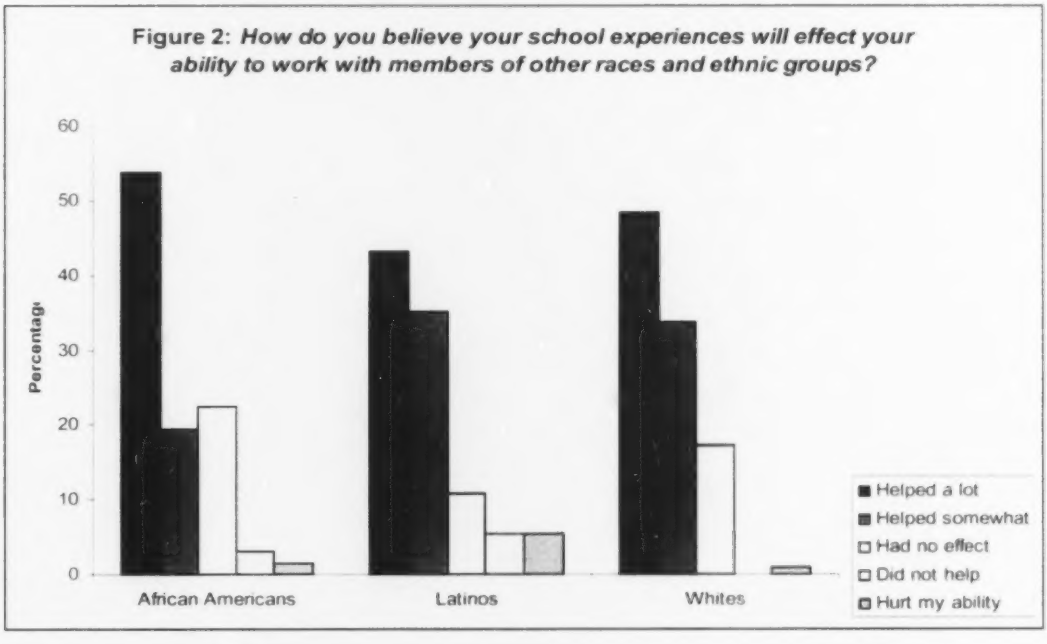
Q27: How comfortable would you be with a work supervisor who was of a different racial or ethnic background than you? (% indicating "very comfortable or "somewhat comfortable")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
93	94	92	95	92	87	94

Students credit their school experiences as contributing to their ability to work with and understand people from different backgrounds. In spite of the city's diversity, children can grow up in communities that are far less diverse than the city as a whole, so school becomes a place where these abilities can be developed. Among all students, nearly seventy percent indicate that their school experiences have "helped a lot" or "helped somewhat" their ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups (Table 7). (Figure 2 includes the full breakdown of responses for African American, Latino, and White students on this particular question.)

Table 7

Q26: How do you believe your school experiences will affect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups? (% indicating "helped somewhat" or "helped a lot")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
73	88	78	82	78	77	79

Figure 2: *How do you believe your school experiences will effect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups?*



Students not only believe that they can work more effectively across social divisions but also that they are better able to understand other groups. Eighty-four percent of both African Americans and Whites said their school experiences had helped them better understand members from different groups, students from other racial/ethnic groups responded similarly (Table 8). This learning is not about optimistic statements from reading great documents or speeches but from the actual interactions with people of diverse background in the school setting.

Table 8.

Q48: How do you believe your school experiences will affect your ability to understand members of other races and ethnic groups? (% indicating "helped somewhat" or "helped a lot")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
84	88	78	84	80	79	82

C. Goals, Opportunities, and Access to Higher Education

Providing access to college is a crucial goal for high schools today. Students who do not receive post-secondary education have little chance for mobility in the job market and are likely to face a life of low and uncertain incomes. Overwhelming majorities of U.S. students want to go to college and a large majority of recent high school graduates actually enroll in college.[8] Being qualified and prepared for a good college are central goals for students and their families. If one indicator of successful desegregation is defined as equalizing opportunity among different racial/ethnic groups, then raising aspirations of all students to similar levels is a first step. We would hope that students, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, would have similar higher education aspirations. In fact, a remarkably high proportion of every group of students report an interest in attending a four-year college, including seventy-eight percent of Latinos, eighty-nine percent of African Americans, and ninety-two percent of Whites (Table 9).

Table 9

Q41: How interested are you in going to a four-year college? (% indicating interested or very interested)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
89	87	78	92	94	90	90

Counselors and college admissions staff know, of course, that there is often a big difference between saying that you want to go to college and actually getting ready for admissions. In the category of advanced courses necessary for competitive college admissions, the Cambridge results show more racial differences and suggest areas for future improvement. For instance, there are important differences between racial groups on the level of interest in taking honors or AP Mathematics or English courses. About half of African American and Latino students report an interest in taking AP math or English. Thirty-five percent of Whites express interest in AP math and 63 in AP English courses (Table 10).

[8] Digest of Education Statistics 1997, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, (Table 184—College enrollment rates of high school graduates).

Table 10

Q38: How interested are you in taking an honors or AP mathematics course? (% indicating interested or very interested)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
50	75	54	35	39	44	44
Q39: How interested are you in taking an honors or AP English course? (% indicating interested or very interested)						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
52	80	57	63	57	49	58

It is also very important to have early information about college admissions requirements in order to adequately prepare for college. Cambridge Rindge and Latin High school is an important urban school in Massachusetts and its students report receiving substantial information about college. Latinos, Whites, and African Americans report receiving information about such things as admissions tests, financial aid, and applications at roughly the same level. About 54 to 57 percent of all students report receiving "a lot " or "some" information about college from their teachers, with Asian students reporting more. About 65-70 percent of all students report receiving "some" to "a lot" of information about college from their counselors, with Latino and Multiracial students reporting this at a modestly lesser degree than do other students (Table 11).

Table 11

Q17: How much information about college admissions have your teachers given you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications) (% indicating "some" or "a lot")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
54	69	57	56	62	53	57
Q18: How much information about college admissions have your counselors given you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications) (% indicating "some" or "a lot")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
75	69	65	75	71	64	72

D. Support

While more than three-fourths of all groups of students desire to attend a four-year college, it is very important to know whether the students' dreams are supported in their schools. The survey shows very high levels of support from teachers for student aspirations. More than three-fourths of African Americans, Latinos, Asians and Whites report such encouragement. On the question shown in Table 12 Latinos and Whites report the highest level of support. In general, teachers strongly encourage student aspirations.

Table 12

Q15: To what extent have your teachers encouraged you to attend college? (% indicating "somewhat encouraged" or "strongly encouraged")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
78	80	86	89	80	69	82

Even more important is the question of whether or not the school's counselors encourage all groups of students to take demanding classes, honors or AP level, which provide excellent preparation for college. On this question, the results are far less optimistic. Students report far less encouragement to take challenging courses from school counselors, but the numbers are particularly low for African Americans, Latinos, and students from "other" racial or ethnic backgrounds. This single survey question cannot, of course, tell us whether these responses reflect discouragement by school counselors, failure to discuss the importance of advanced classes, or other causes. Some of this difference obviously results from serious gaps in achievement levels that exist when students enter the Cambridge schools and when they leave. The school district is actively engaged in a national coalition working on these problems and it is very important to make certain that students of all racial and ethnic groups are encouraged to take the excellent pre-collegiate courses the high school offers. This difference should be examined much more closely by school and district personnel.

Some AP students spoke about the problem: "I like being in a diverse school very much but my classes, especially the AP classes, lack diversity. The classes that are more diverse are enjoyable, and the AP courses would be much better with a more diverse group of students." In other words, part of the potential intellectual excitement of the classes was lost. Another commented: " I think counselors should encourage black students to attend AP classes. Because presently I'm in an AP History class and I'm the only one who is black. When we have discussions about the black community I get offended and intimidated. I feel I can't attend this class any longer. And this year I left my AP English class because the teacher wasn't willing to help me and suggested that I take a regular English course."

Table 13

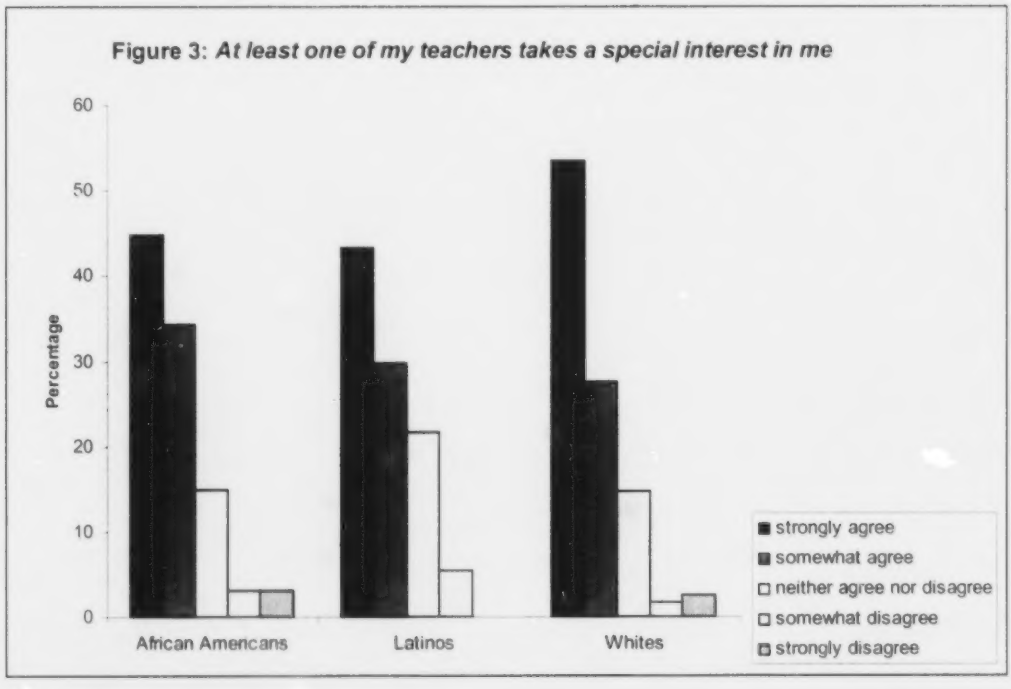
Q20: To what extent have your counselors encouraged you to take Honors and/or AP classes? (% indicating "somewhat encouraged" or "strongly encouraged")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
43	75	36	66	38	62	53

One very important issue for a student's successful incorporation into the academic life of the school is whether or not a student feels his or her teachers care about their academic success. Many adults remember the powerful impact of a strong teacher who showed interest in their work. The survey asks about students' perceptions about whether or not their teachers care about them, and their responses are fairly similar across all racial/ethnic groups, ranging from 65% to 81% positive. White and African American students are more likely to report that their teacher "takes a special interest in them" than Asian or Latino students (Table 14, Figure 3). Since Cambridge is a big high school,[9] the kind of school where lower achieving students often feel lost, this measure of teacher interest in individual students is very promising.

Table 14

Q23: At least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me. (% indicating "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree")						
African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
79	75	73	81	65	77	77

[9] The total enrollment at Cambridge Rindge and Latin high school is nearly 2000 students, see "High School Student Data Report, 2000-2001", Office of Development and Assessment, Cambridge Public Schools.



How does Cambridge compare to other districts?

Compared to several of the other districts we studied, the record of Cambridge teachers in the area of teacher support looks very positive. Students report receiving more attention from their teachers in almost all racial groups in comparison with students in several other districts (Table 12a). (Since the reports have not yet been released in the other cities, the names of the districts are omitted here.)

Table 12a

Q23: At least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me. (% indicating "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree")

District	African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
Cambridge	**79**	**75**	**73**	**81**	**65**	**77**	**77**
City A	70	57	56	71	68	73	66
City B	72		65	65	68		67
City C	68	46	57	66	48		51

In addition, on factors that schools can affect, such as the schools impact on learning to work with other groups and aspirations for college (Table 12b and Table 12c), Cambridge students respond more favorably than those in all other cities in our study, for virtually all racial/ethnic groups. These indicators are of particular importance, because they ask specifically about how students' school experiences affected these important skills.

Table 12b

How do you believe your school experiences will affect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups? (% indicating "helped somewhat" or "helped a lot")

District	African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
Cambridge	**73**	**88**	**78**	**82**	**78**	**77**	**79**
City A	72	78	54	71	70	70	71
City B	74		77	68	75		75
City C	71	73	73	71	73		70

Table 12c

To what extent have your teachers encouraged you to attend college? (% indicating "somewhat encouraged" or "strongly encouraged")

District	African Americans	Asians	Latinos	Whites	Other	Multiracial	Total
Cambridge	**78**	**80**	**86**	**89**	**80**	**69**	**82**
City A	72	77	59	72	68	72	72
City B	75		78	74	66		74
City C	69	71	70	76	64		68

Conclusions

Students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds report similar views, almost identical, on some key questions on the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire. The similarity among students' reported attitudes and views suggests that the school is providing a broadly positive experience, which generally speaking, leaves no group feeling poorly treated or with negative attitudes towards relationships with other students. Cambridge students indicate a consistently high degree of comfort living and working with students from other groups. First, they feel well prepared for functioning as adults in a very diverse community. Second, students report their school experiences have increased their level of understanding of points of view different from their own and enhanced their understanding of the background of other groups. Third, students report they feel prepared to work in job settings with people who are different from themselves, and further report their school experiences will help them work with, and better understand people from racial and ethnic groups different from their own. Finally, they report positive support and encouragement from their teachers, both generally and specific to their higher education aspirations. In a country experiencing high levels of segregation in housing and schools, and in a world tormented by ethnic divisions, this is very positive news. The picture, however, shows that racial equity has not been fully achieved and there are still certain kinds of unequal treatment within the school that could be improved with appropriate school leadership and staff training. It is through the commitment of the Cambridge leadership to continue to maximize the benefits of diversity in the city's schools that will serve as the groundwork for addressing remaining concerns of racial/ethnic disparities in educational opportunities and in improving problems of understanding among students from an increasingly diverse set of backgrounds.

One of the limitations of studying Cambridge's only high school is that we cannot compare it with other more segregated or integrated schools within the city. We have conducted parallel studies in six other communities across the U.S., however. Although we cannot release the data from those other communities, which have not yet received similar reports, the level of positive response among Cambridge seniors on most of the survey questions is the highest we have seen among all of the students surveyed. In our studies across the nation we have also been able to compare segregated and integrated schools and we do see clear benefits in more integrated schools along many of these outcomes.

We believe that the detailed survey data available to the school district should help in policy and staff development strategies both to assist Cambridge staff in understanding how generally positive the results are and for identifying areas for leadership and further training.

A Personal Note

Those of us who worked on this study are very happy to be able to report such positive findings about our neighbors in this community, something that is far too rare in civil rights research. We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the school district and the active interest by Cambridge's leaders in this work and admire the commitment the school committee recently expressed in adopting an innovative new plan to continue diversity in the city's schools. As citizens in this community, as well as researchers, we are excited by the prospect of future collaborations with the Cambridge schools.

Gary Orfield, Co-Director, The Civil Rights Project